



Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission

Report of Recommendations January 2007

Prepared for Governor Jennifer M. Granholm
and the Michigan Legislature

Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission

Report of Recommendations

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Agricultural Tourism Local Zoning Guidebook and
Model Zoning Ordinance Provisions

Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission

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As the lead agency in this effort, the Michigan Department of Agriculture provided staff support and expertise to the commission and assisted in preparing this report. Thanks and recognition go to Director Mitch Irwin, and staff members Liana Bennett, Linda Jones and Jeanne Lipe, for their dedication and enthusiasm and their support of the Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission and Michigan's agricultural tourism industry.

Finally, the commission and staff recognize the valuable input of those who participated on the three subcommittees. Countless hours of discussion, written input and editing were logged by subcommittee members during the process of creating this report, enabling the commission to capture the issues and recommendations covered in this report. A complete list of subcommittee participants is included in the back of this report.



Executive Summary

Agricultural tourism, as defined by P.A. 46 of 2005, is “the practice of visiting an agribusiness, horticultural, or agricultural operation, including, but not limited to, a farm, orchard, or winery or a companion animal or livestock show, for the purpose of recreation, education, or active involvement in the operation, other than as a contractor or employee of the operation.” Simply put, agricultural tourism is a value-added marketing opportunity for those involved in agricultural production, and provides an entertainment or educational opportunity associated with sale or show of agricultural products.

As a value-added marketing opportunity, agricultural tourism is considered increasingly important to Michigan’s economic health and diversification. Agriculture and tourism are recognized as Michigan’s second and third leading industries. When they are combined through agricultural tourism, participating businesses enhance Michigan’s farm gate economy and help create economic diversification and stability in Michigan.



Opening up farms to visitors has become a way for many Michigan growers to create a dependable source of revenue to mitigate the uncertainties of weather, disease and crop prices. By offering fresh farm commodities directly to customers, producers can highlight local flavor, and freshness and provide conveniently located healthy choices for consumers. Direct farm marketing also provides opportunities for new product development and more efficient farm and marketing practices. Connecting the sale of fresh, locally grown products with a recreational or educational opportunity makes the farm a desired destination.

The Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission was established with bi-partisan support by P.A. 46 of 2005, in June 2005. The commission was charged to:

- Detail the effects of local zoning on agricultural tourism;
- Draft model local zoning ordinance provisions to promote agricultural tourism;
- Write recommendations concerning the use of logo signage to promote agricultural tourism;
- Write recommendations for other measures to promote and enhance agricultural tourism; and,
- Research other issues concerning agricultural tourism.

The nine-member commission, appointed by the director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, included representatives from agricultural tourism enterprises, local units of government, Travel Michigan, a chamber of commerce in a rural area and the Michigan Department of Agriculture. At the first commission meeting, members formed three subcommittee groups to address the specific points of the legislation: promotion and awareness, signage, and zoning.

The subcommittees researched pertinent information that resulted in a set of recommendations. The research consisted of commission members' personal experience and expertise, input from a diverse group of associations and organizations with ties to agricultural tourism, public listening sessions, academic studies and discussions with other states' organizations.

Through this process, the Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission has gained a comprehensive understanding of the current issues and challenges for Michigan's agricultural tourism industry. The issues and challenges identified by the commission can be categorized as either short term or those needing a longer term strategy.

Major obstacles facing agricultural tourism operations in Michigan include the non-uniformity of zoning ordinances and local control from one township or municipal government to the next, and, ironically, the uniformity of regulation within a local unit of government, without consideration of the seasonality of an agricultural tourism operation or the economic and social benefit of that business to the community. The Michigan Townships Association has identified that 80 percent of the communities in Michigan are rural and embrace the positive economic and quality of life impacts of agricultural tourism. The challenge will be to craft regulations and agricultural tourism opportunities that are flexible enough to meet the needs of both urban and rural areas. The commission recognizes the importance of local control in zoning issues and the need for development to assure the economic viability and infrastructure needs of a community. With each local area having its own distinct ordinances that help maintain the unique character of the community, creating an overarching, one-size-fits-all zoning ordinance for agricultural tourism is not feasible. However, development needs to be balanced with green, open or agricultural space through planning and smart growth.

Local zoning ordinances regarding the selling of development rights are also an issue, because of the restrictions placed on lands covered by the development rights. Farmland preservation ordinances need to be flexible to allow profitable value-added agricultural opportunities.

The cost of liability insurance was also identified as a huge burden on agricultural tourism enterprises, especially those that feature animal exhibits like petting zoos or horse-drawn wagon rides, or those that offer haunted trails and other entertainment options. There is a need to develop expertise in the insurance industry to specifically address the unique requirements of agricultural tourism operators in Michigan.

Signage issues include limited affordable signage options on Interstate highways; limited use options under the Tourist Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) program for tourism attractions near state highways; township zoning ordinances that restrict signs in rural areas; sign clutter in some areas; and the high cost of signage.

The commission developed the following recommendations to be presented to the Governor and to the Legislature. The full discourse of each recommendation, including explanations and implementation strategies, is detailed in this report.

Recommendations include:

- Establish an agricultural tourism manager and staff within the Michigan Department of Agriculture.
- Fund and conduct research on the state's agricultural tourism industry to more effectively develop a strategy and promotion plan for growing and promoting the industry in Michigan.
- Prepare informational pieces for the agricultural community and for Michigan consumers about the health, social, and economic benefits of agricultural tourism.
- Develop and implement a marketing campaign to promote agricultural tourism businesses and events.
- Improve the effectiveness of the Tourism Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) program for agricultural tourism businesses.
- Investigate opportunities for tourism attraction signage on limited access highways and trunk lines.
- Develop local community programs to promote successful signage promotions.
- Continue to support balanced regulations of billboards and other private signage opportunities.
- Explore new technologies as possible alternatives to signage for travelers.
- Create opportunities for informational discussions between local units of government and agricultural tourism operators.
- Develop insurance standards for agricultural tourism businesses.
- Create Right to Agricultural Tourism Legislation.



Introduction

The Michigan Economy

Michigan's leaders are looking to broaden our economy base from a solely manufacturing state to include a variety of industries that would promote diversification and greater stability. Some of these opportunities can be found in tourism and agriculture, as they are the state's second and third largest industries.

Tourism

Tourism is a growing industry. As a whole, the population is becoming more affluent and thus has greater disposable income to spend on travel. Tourism is now one of the top three leading industries in 49 states.¹ Americans spent \$500 billion during one billion personal domestic trips in 2000; that relates to 5 percent of the nominal Gross Domestic Product. Of the trips in 2000, 74 percent were for personal leisure. Not only does travel influence the economy with actual dollars spent, but also through the creation of jobs. Employment in the travel industry has grown 25 percent, while employment in the manufacturing sector has remained essentially unchanged.²

Michigan Tourism

Michigan's uniqueness has made it the leading drive-to destination in the Midwest for leisure travel. The state's tourism industry has grown at an average rate of about 4 percent since the mid 1980s.³ There is significant potential for economic growth when we combine the advantages of Michigan's tourism product and its proximity to the aging population who has time and money to spend on travel.

The core components of the Michigan tourism system are:

- Lodging
- Food and beverage
- Attractions - museums, festivals, shopping complexes, sporting events, and entire communities
- Commercial recreation - golf, skiing, and charter boats
- Land and water - more than 3,000 miles of Great Lakes coastline, national, state and local parks and recreation areas, lakes, rivers, trails and accessible lands available for general recreation.



Travel Michigan has reported that visitor spending during 2005 in Michigan exceeded \$17.5 billion, generating \$971 million in state tax collections. In the same year, the state's tourism industry employed over 193,000 people.⁴ Travelers from outside Michigan had fewer trips to Michigan than Michiganders made to non-Michigan locations, resulting in a domestic travel deficit in 1995 of approximately 3.5 million person trips. This, in turn, resulted in a multi-billion dollar loss to the Michigan economy. Thus, we need to keep Michiganders within our state and attract our neighbors to visit Michigan.

Although residents of the popular northern destination counties are highly dependent on tourism as a source of income, tourist spending impacts all 83 counties. In fact, Wayne County accounted for more than 9 percent of the state's tourism activity during 1996 to 2001. Michigan State University has created a tourism profile for each county based on data collected between 1996 and 2001. These can be found at <http://tourism.ttr.msu.edu>.

There are many opportunities to increase Michigan's market share of the tourism dollar. The travel trade deficit will continue to widen unless Michigan begins to proactively support all facets of tourist product development and tourism promotion. Agricultural tourism can play a significant, positive role in this regard.

Michigan Agriculture

Agriculture is the second largest industry in the state, contributing \$60.1 billion annually to our state's economy, and employing one million Michigan residents. Michigan ranks second among all states in the diversity of crops we grow. Historically, Michigan agriculture has been an important and viable industry for the state. However, the face of Michigan agriculture is changing. In the late 1800s, almost half of Michigan residents lived on farms while that number is only two percent today. In 1930, one farmer produced enough food to feed mainly just his family, or about 10 people. Today, one farm supports 130 people or more.

Farmers are facing increasing pressure to sell their land for development. Farms and farmland contribute much more than jobs and dollars – they provide open space for recreation, food for Michigan residents, and environmental benefits, and they represent a rural way of life that is an integral part of our state's heritage. Value-added marketing opportunities provide much-needed revenue sources that protect our land resources by helping farm families keep farming.

Nearly one-third of all crops grown in Michigan are consumed in other countries, yet research shows us that Michigan residents prefer to buy Michigan-grown products. If consumers spent an additional 10 percent of their at-home food budget on Michigan foods, sales of Michigan-grown foods would increase by \$730 million. As Michigan builds a stronger, more diverse economy for the 21st century, the agri-food sector will play an increasingly important role. Additionally, buying locally grown foods also has a positive affect on the health and nutrition of Michigan citizens. Most Americans do not consume the recommended daily allowance of fresh fruits and vegetables. Agricultural tourism experiences help increase the access to and purchase of healthy, fresh, locally produced foods.



Michigan's Agricultural Tourism Industry

Agricultural tourism provides an increasingly important source of income to strengthen Michigan's family farms. The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) estimates there are over 2,000, and even upwards of 4,000, agricultural tourism businesses in the state.

Agricultural tourism provides many benefits, including:

- Keeping the farm in the family;
- Allowing for continued farming and keeping the farm viable;
- Generating additional income or off-season income;
- Increasing and diversifying the market;
- Providing a healthy food choice to consumers;
- Responding to a need or opportunity in the market (specialty product); and,
- Interacting with and educating customers/visitors about farming.

As a value-added marketing opportunity, agricultural tourism is considered increasingly important to Michigan's economic health and diversification. When tourism and agriculture are combined, they enhance Michigan's farm gate economy, and help create economic stability in our food and agriculture industry. Opening up farms to visitors is increasingly becoming a way for Michigan growers to create a dependable source of revenue to mitigate the uncertainties of weather, disease and crop prices. By offering fresh farm commodities directly to customers, producers can trade on local flavor and freshness as well as health benefits, which can lead to new product development and more efficient farm and marketing practices. Connecting the sale of healthy, fresh, locally grown products with a recreational or educational opportunity makes the farm a desired destination.

A recent MSU study showed that 14 percent of travelers in Michigan (both residents and visitors) reported they had visited a farmers' market, a U-Pick farm or an orchard during their most recent leisure trip in Michigan. When the respondents were asked how interested they would be in specific suggested tourism opportunities in Michigan, moderately ranked activities included:

- Living and working on a working farm or orchard;
- Hiking on a trail from one farm Bed and Breakfast to another;
- Learning to grow grapes and make wine at a working vineyard; and,
- Learning country arts and crafts on a working farm.⁵

In 2002, a survey of Michigan agricultural tourism businesses was conducted by Western Michigan University. The businesses were asked to rank the most common products promoted at these businesses. The top ten, ranked in order of mention are:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Apples | 6. Sweet corn |
| 2. Christmas trees | 7. Blueberries |
| 3. Pumpkins | 8. Bedding plants |
| 4. Animal products | 9. Trees / shrubs |
| 5. Strawberries | 10. Wine |

The businesses surveyed were then grouped into the following categories of agricultural tourism businesses:

- Berries- U-pick and ready-picked, some retail food products offered.
- Orchard - U-pick and ready-picked, cider and some retail food products offered.
- Farmers' Market - In-town, not on farm, location, with fresh and processed products.
- Fall Harvest - Diverse, seasonal operations combining retail sales with farm experiences, including haunted adventures or corn mazes.
- Christmas - Christmas trees and other holiday décor for sale, some offer food service and wagon rides.
- Animal Products / Attractions - Wide variety of businesses including animal observation, hunting preserves, natural fiber sales, public horseback riding.
- Farm Experience - Visitor experience on a farm, often dairy, connected with petting zoos, historical themes and observation of processing facilities; includes school tours.
- Honey / Maple – Honey and maple production, other food-related products offered.
- Nursery - Bedding plants, annuals, trees, landscaping services.
- Vineyard / Winery – Vineyard and winery tours, wine tasting.⁶

Most agricultural tourism businesses are considered diversions in the tourism industry. They provide activities travelers could attend closer to home but for which time and group dynamics make the experience more attractive to undertake while traveling. However, travel that involves an overnight stay generates the greatest economic impact on the local community. Thus, the more diversions an area has, the longer people will stay in the area and ultimately spend money. For those who are passing through, diversions tend to be impulse decisions that are based on the mood of the group, easy access, and signage or hunger pangs. Since there are usually no advanced reservations required and no penalties for a last minute decision to stop, it is important for travelers to know about the available diversion attractions in the planned travel region so they can have an optimum variety of choices.

The Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission

The Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission was created by PA 46 of 2005, effective June 16, 2005. The nine-member commission was created under the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and appointed by MDA Director Mitch Irwin. Four of the members represent agricultural tourism enterprises, and two represent local government. The remaining commission is comprised of one member each from Travel Michigan; MDA; and a convention bureau, visitors' bureau, or chamber of commerce in a rural area.

The commission was asked to study the impact of local zoning on agricultural tourism businesses. In many instances, local ordinances can restrict the activities taking place on the farm, the location of a farm market, or the location of crucial signage directing visitors to the businesses. In addition, the commission researched signage issues in the state.

The commission was also tasked with developing recommendations for increasing awareness and developing promotional support.

The commission formed three subcommittees: Promotion and Awareness, Signage, and Zoning. Additional stakeholders beyond the commissioners were included in the smaller workgroups. Organizations represented on subcommittees included:

- Michigan Department of Agriculture
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Farm Marketing & Agri-Tourism Association
- Michigan State University
- Michigan Farm Bureau
- Michigan Townships Association
- Michigan Municipal League
- Michigan Land Use Institute
- Michigan Food & Farming Systems
- Land Information Access Association
- Private agricultural tourism businesses

The commission met as a full group twice to discuss common issues among the subcommittees. The subcommittees each met on several occasions. See Appendix C for a list of meetings with brief details.

The commission developed its recommendations based on:

- Expertise and interest of the commissioners and external participants.
- Research and reports relating to agricultural tourism issues, in Michigan, throughout the nation, and in Ontario, Canada.
- Public input from listening sessions conducted throughout the state.



Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission

Recommendations

1. Promotion and Awareness

As the interest in and focus on agricultural tourism has grown, so has the need for a coordinated effort to promote, enhance and grow this segment of the industry. There needs to be a combination of resources and collaboration among the many organizations that play a role in promoting and participating in agricultural tourism in our state, combined with a strategic industry and consumer outreach effort on the benefits and opportunities surrounding the industry. In addition, specific state resources need to be allocated to support the growth and promotion of this economically important industry.

Recommendation 1A: Resources/Collaboration

Secure resources and enhance collaborative efforts of the various industry organizations with an interest in agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism and leisure travel, to promote and expand Michigan's agricultural tourism industry.

Implementation Strategies:

- Provide a focus on agricultural tourism within the Michigan Department of Agriculture by appointing an agricultural tourism manager and staff within MDA to coordinate and implement agricultural activities for the department in cooperation with the agricultural tourism industry; and to serve as a problem-solving ombudsperson for agricultural tourism operations.
- Nurture networking opportunities and support an industry-driven effort to expand, promote and represent the interests of farm marketing and agricultural tourism businesses in Michigan;
- Develop public policy to support growth of agricultural tourism; and,
- Develop collaborative projects to raise awareness of the importance of the Michigan agricultural tourism industry to the state's economy; and expand growth opportunities for agricultural tourism businesses.

Recommendation 1B: Research/Planning

Fund and conduct research to gather information needed to effectively develop a strategy for promoting and expanding opportunities for agricultural tourism in Michigan.

Implementation Strategies:

- In partnership with industry organizations and through a media campaign to identify existing agricultural tourism operations, develop and conduct a county-by-county inventory of Michigan's agriculture and agricultural tourism assets, and build a comprehensive database of this information.
- Utilize Global Positioning System and Web-based technologies to enhance the use options for information gathered through the inventory survey process.

- Fund and conduct a research study of existing Michigan agricultural tourism operations to determine the benchmark figures for the current size, scope and economic impact of the industry in our state.
- Develop and conduct consumer research to determine benchmark figures for travel and spending habits as they relate to agricultural tourism.
- Develop and implement a multi-stakeholder statewide Strategic Marketing Plan for agricultural tourism, with input and support from the industry.
- Fund and conduct on-going research to monitor the impact of agricultural tourism efforts.

Recommendation 1C: Increased Awareness and Outreach

Raise the awareness level among consumers, industry and policy makers of Michigan's agricultural tourism industry, its size and scope, and the economic, social and health/nutrition benefits the industry contributes to our state.

Implementation Strategies:

- Develop and disseminate outreach information to agricultural tourism operations on the promotional opportunities available for their businesses through Travel Michigan and the Michigan Department of Agriculture.
- MDA should assist the agricultural tourism industry in identifying current opportunities and developing new ones that include the components that represent a high-quality tourist experience and give travelers what they are looking for.
- MDA should develop and disseminate a start-up guide for agricultural operations interested in adding an agricultural tourism component to their operation.
- State agencies involved in tourism and their industry partners should develop and conduct a public outreach campaign to promote the importance and value of agricultural tourism, and the state's overall agriculture industry, to our state's economy and quality of life, and the health benefits and economic impact of buying locally produced products.
- MDA should maintain a directory of agricultural tourism operations available for consumers to visit, integrate the directory with current printed and online publications, and strive to include GPS coordinates for each site to utilize emerging technologies for directional navigation.
- MDA and MDOT should promote the development and use of state-designated Scenic, Heritage or Recreational Routes that feature agricultural tourism businesses.



- State agencies involved in tourism and industry stakeholders should develop and promote a pilot Recreational Route with an agricultural tourism theme in an area of the state that is rich in agricultural tourism attractions.
- MDA should foster a strong working relationship with the Michigan Townships Association, the Michigan Municipal League, agricultural tourism operators, pertinent associations, commodity groups, and related stakeholders to promote and encourage the adoption of the Agricultural Tourism Zoning Guidebook and Model Zoning Ordinance Provisions developed by the Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission.

Recommendation 1D: Promotion

Develop and implement a promotional campaign that includes programs and materials that promote the agricultural tourism industry, its businesses and events.

Implementation Strategies:

- The State of Michigan should invest resources in and provide an opportunity to leverage federal, state and industry resources through a matching grant program for agricultural tourism promotion, new product development, and market expansion.
- The State of Michigan should take advantage of opportunities to cross-promote Michigan agriculture with public health, economic development, cultural activities, and travel marketing campaigns.
- Travel Michigan, MDA and other stakeholder organizations should work closely to increase opportunities and marketing for agricultural tourism in the state, and to promote existing opportunities to the industry.
- The State of Michigan should seek collaborative promotional opportunities to build on the success of existing programs (e.g., wine trails).
- MDA and Travel Michigan should develop a process for assisting agricultural tourism operators in identifying and using the existing promotional tools and resources available through state agencies.
- MDA should expand its agricultural tourism Web site to promote activities and events at Michigan agricultural tourism operations, and to connect agricultural tourism operators with existing resources for starting, expanding or improving their businesses.
- MDA, MSU and other stakeholder organizations should develop marketing materials for Michigan food and agriculture tours and trails, and investigate opportunities to combine these with cultural or eco-tourism tours and trails.
- The State of Michigan should promote Michigan agricultural fairs and festivals to a larger audience.
- The State of Michigan should establish user-friendly informational kiosks at rest areas across the state that allow Michigan travelers to access Web-based information about agricultural tourism attractions and other tourism opportunities.

2. Signage

Agricultural tourism attractions are often located far from well-established travel routes. While many customers are prepared for, and in fact enjoy, the “off the beaten track” experience of a rural destination, customers need extra assistance in locating these businesses. Difficulty in finding a farm market or winery may lead to a negative consumer impression that will diminish customer loyalty and/or reduce purchasing at the farm. This subject area is known as “wayfinding” in the tourism and transportation industries.



Agricultural tourism operators should take full advantage of wayfinding methods that are available to them. However, in some situations the committee found that signage options available to the operators are unclear and inconsistent. Aside from traditional signs, technologies such as Global Positioning Systems offer new opportunities and greater potential for wayfinding. Marketing activities such as brochures with detailed maps are also a helpful tool for the agricultural tourism operator in directing customers to the business.

Recommendation 2A: Tourism Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) Program

Improve the effectiveness of the Tourism Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) program on state trunklines for travelers wishing to visit agricultural tourism attractions.

Implementation Strategies:

- The legislature should review the existing TODS program in Michigan to determine if the program could be improved to maximize the opportunities to direct consumers to agricultural tourism attractions.

In particular, the state should:

- a) Revisit the objectives and implementation of the TODS program;
- b) Develop reporting requirements to assess the performance of the program in meeting the needs of tourism businesses and the traveling public;
- c) Provide clear information for agricultural tourism businesses regarding which roads are eligible for TODS;
- d) Investigate use of one or more standard icons for agricultural tourism attractions;
- e) Conduct consumer research to determine public perceptions of the sign programs;
- f) Conduct research within the tourism community to assess the industry's satisfaction with the program;
- g) Develop a communication plan for conveying information about the TODS program to the tourism industry; and,
- h) Through the Michigan Department of Agriculture, encourage organizations in Michigan that are connected with agricultural tourism (Michigan State University, Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Association, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Farmers' Market Association, commodity groups with agricultural tourism interests, etc.) to look for opportunities to share information with their members/stakeholders about the opportunities available with the state signage programs.

Recommendation 2B: Limited Access Highways

Investigate opportunities for signage for attractions on limited access highways in Michigan under the Logo Signing Program, officially known as Specific Services Signing (gas, food, lodging).

Implementation Strategies:

- The state should review the Logo Signing program to determine if there are opportunities to work with the U.S. Department of Transportation to expand signage on limited access freeways to include attractions, as has been done in other states.
- Under its jurisdiction, MDOT sets the regulations for logo signs on freeways. Logo (Specific Services Signs) are located on rural freeway rights-of-way to inform motorists of gas, food, camping, and lodging services at the upcoming exit.

Recommendation 2C: State Trunklines

Investigate opportunities for other forms of signage on Michigan state trunklines.

Implementation Strategies:

- The state should investigate current practices for other forms of signage on state roads to see if there are additional opportunities for agricultural tourism businesses.
- MDOT should convene an information session with representatives from Travel Michigan, MDA, and other state agencies with tourism interests, to review opportunities under General Information Signs and develop state-designated Scenic, Heritage or Recreational Routes that feature agricultural tourism businesses.
- State agencies involved in tourism and industry stakeholders should develop a pilot Recreational Route with an agricultural tourism theme in an area of the state that is rich in agricultural tourism attractions.

Recommendation 2D: Role of Local Units of Government

Local units of government should develop and encourage use of effective signage programs on county and township roads for agricultural tourism businesses.

Implementation Strategies:

- The state should gather and make available to local units of government and industry stakeholders information on successful agricultural tourism themed routes in Michigan and other regions, so that these models may be duplicated in other regions of the state.
- MDA should gather and share information about successful programs for using signage for agricultural tourism attractions.

Recommendation 2E: Balanced Regulation

Continue to support balanced regulation of billboards and other private signage opportunities in Michigan.

Implementation Strategies:

- The state should continue to enforce appropriate, recognized oversight of billboards and private signage along state roads to balance the needs of travelers for information with the scenic attributes of the Michigan landscape.
- MDOT should continue to provide regulatory oversight for private signs located along state roads with input from stakeholders.

Recommendation 2F: Technology

Explore new technologies that will reduce or eliminate the need for roadside signage to assist travelers in locating agricultural tourism attractions.

Implementation Strategies:

- The state should investigate how new technologies can be utilized to reduce or eliminate the need for roadside signage.
- The state should provide leadership in educating the agricultural tourism industry about technological advancements that might assist individual businesses in reducing their need for roadside signs.
- All appropriate state agencies should promote the use of new technologies to tourism operators at industry meetings, in newsletters, etc.



3. Zoning

Agricultural zoning is an important part of the local zoning mix as it provides the community with balance. Agricultural zoning designates a portion of the land to farming and some of its related activities. The definition of farming generally includes a parcel of land that is of minimum acreage and used for the production of plants or animals for use by humans. This allows, but is not limited to, sod crops; grains and feed crops; dairy animals and dairy products; poultry and poultry products; livestock, including beef cattle, goats, sheep, swine, exotic animals like emus, llamas and rheas, and horses, with the breeding and grazing of any or all of these animals; bees and apiary products; fur animals; trees and forest products; all fruits, including tree-fruits, grapes, nuts and berries; vegetables; and nursery, floral, ornamental and greenhouse products.

In most agriculturally zoned areas, garages, machine sheds and barns are considered as-of-right use and are permitted. The activities such as planting, spraying, harvesting and storing or raising of livestock are also considered acceptable farming practices under agricultural zoning.

However, there are a number of practices that are often critical to the farm's survival that fall under conditions that are prohibited or are subject to limitations or require special permissions. These agricultural tourism activities allow the general public onto the farm through such means as roadside stands or U-pick operations. Local zoning rules also often state that farmers need to apply for variances or special use permits to expand their business with new buildings or agricultural-related activities. This becomes time consuming, costly and often the efforts to expand are abandoned or unsuccessful. When the land is kept under agricultural zoning, such permits may not be needed as these activities are permitted under law. As such, the definition of farming needs to be expanded to include "the direct sale of such goods to consumers on the farm's location and farm-related activities."

An "Agricultural Tourism Local Zoning Guidebook and Model Zoning Ordinance Provisions" booklet was developed by the Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission to assist local units of government in understanding the unique issues and opportunities surrounding agricultural tourism. A copy of the guidebook is available at www.Michigan.gov/agtourism.

Recommendation 3A: Opportunities for Information Exchange

Create opportunities for open discussion and information exchange between local administrators and agricultural tourism operators.

Implementation Strategies:

- The Michigan Department of Agriculture should work with the Michigan Townships Association and the Michigan Municipal League to post the Agricultural Tourism Local Zoning Guidebook and Model Zoning Ordinance Provisions on various Web sites accessible to local officials and others;
- The Michigan Townships Association and the Michigan Municipal League should assist in the distribution of the Agricultural Tourism Local Zoning Guidebook and Model Ordinance Provisions to their members;
- The Michigan Department of Agriculture should make available copies of the Agricultural Tourism Local Zoning Guidebook and Model Zoning Ordinance Provisions and distribute to agricultural tourism operators through pertinent associations, commodity groups, related stakeholders and the media;



- Michigan State University Planning and Zoning Center, in association with the Michigan Townships Association and the Michigan Municipal League, should develop and host regional meetings with local government administrators and agricultural tourism operators to discuss zoning needs and implications;
- Support an area of expertise in Michigan State University Extension with regards to planning, zoning and legal issues surrounding agricultural tourism, and encourage MSUE to become a larger presence at local zoning meetings to help promote the agricultural tourism industry;
- Provide a forum for engaging the Michigan Townships Association and the Michigan Municipal League to strengthen support for agricultural tourism in Michigan;
- Create a work group to monitor implementation and use of the model zoning ordinance and guide book in local communities, and evaluate the effectiveness of the ordinance for both urban and rural areas of the state; and,
- Connect farmers who want to diversify their operations with their local planning commissions and zoning departments, to make sure that plans for their new enterprises are compatible with community goals and objectives.

4. Other Issues

While conducting research on the three main areas of promotion, signage and zoning, the commission became aware of other issues that are critical to the agricultural tourism industry. The recommendations concerning these are below.

Recommendation 4A: Insurance Standards

Develop insurance standards for agricultural tourism businesses.

Implementation Strategies:

- Develop insurance guidelines for the various types of agricultural tourism businesses.
- Clarify legislatively that agricultural tourism businesses are covered and/or require insurance companies to offer adequate coverage
- Explore opportunities to make insurance affordable such as offering tax credits to businesses and individuals who purchase insurance policies for agricultural tourism operations.
- Encourage insurance carriers to offer agricultural tourism coverage.



Recommendation 4B: Right to Agricultural Tourism Legislation

Create and oversee Right to Agricultural Tourism legislation.

Implementation Strategies:

- Enact legislation that allows farmers to market directly to consumers and conduct agricultural activities including, but not limited to, production, processing and packaging of agricultural products, farm market sales, agriculture-related educational and farm-based recreational activities.
- Enact legislation that removes unnecessary use-oriented impediments to encourage adaptive use of farm buildings and farmlands.
- Create Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs) for agricultural tourism operations that include a set of rural performance standards.
- Develop a conflict resolution process to improve communication among farmers, municipalities and private citizens.

References

1 Brooks, Roger. *Destination Marketing / Branding*; Travel Michigan Fall 2005 Conference; The 25 Immutable Rules of Successful Tourism” by Roger Brooks and Maury Forman.

2 Holecek, Donald E. *Travel Tourism and Recreation in Michigan: Chapter 22 in Michigan at the Millenium, A Benchmark and Analysis of Its Fiscal and Economic Structure*; Edited by Ballard, Courant, Drake, Fisher and Gerber. Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, MI.

3 Ibid.

4 Zimmerman, George. *Travel Michigan Report*; Travel Michigan Fall 2005.

5 Spencer, Daniel M. and Mahoney, Edward M. *The Growth Potential for Agriculture and Natural Resource Products Tourism*, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. 1998.

6 Veeck, Ann, Veeck, Gregory and Che, Deborah. *2002 Survey of Agritourism Operators in Michigan*; Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI. 2004.



Appendices

Appendix A – Public Act 46 of 2005

Act No. 46
Public Acts of 2005
Approved by the Governor
June 16, 2005
Filed with the Secretary of State
June 16, 2005
EFFECTIVE DATE: June 16, 2005

STATE OF MICHIGAN 93RD LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION OF 2005

Introduced by Senators Brown, Van Woerkom, Gilbert, Birkholz, Sanborn, Cropsey, Goschka, Allen, Stamas, Hardiman, Garcia, Jelinek and Barcia

ENROLLED SENATE BILL No. 225

AN ACT to create an agricultural tourism advisory commission; to provide for its powers and duties; and to repeal acts and parts of acts.

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

Sec. 1. As used in this act:

- (a) "Agricultural tourism" means the practice of visiting an agribusiness, horticultural, or agricultural operation, including, but not limited to, a farm, orchard, or winery or a companion animal or livestock show, for the purpose of recreation, education, or active involvement in the operation, other than as a contractor or employee of the operation.
- (b) "Commission" means the agricultural tourism advisory commission created in section 2.
- (c) "Department" means the department of agriculture.
- (d) "Director" means the director of the department.

Sec. 2.

- (1) The agricultural tourism advisory commission is created within the department.
- (2) The commission shall consist of the following members appointed by the director:
 - (a) Four individuals representing agricultural tourism enterprises.
 - (b) Two individuals representing, or from an association representing, local units of government.
 - (c) One individual representing the travel Michigan division of the Michigan economic development corporation.
 - (d) One individual representing a convention bureau, visitors bureau, or chamber of commerce in a rural area.
 - (e) One individual representing the department.
- (3) The members first appointed to the commission shall be appointed within 60 days after the effective date of this act.
- (4) Members of the commission shall serve for the life of the commission.
- (5) If a vacancy occurs on the commission, the director shall make an appointment to fill the vacancy.
- (6) A member of the commission may be removed by the director, for incompetence, dereliction of duty, malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office, or any other good cause.

Sec. 3.

- (1) The first meeting of the commission shall be called by the director. At the first meeting, the commission shall elect from among its members a chairperson and other officers, as it considers necessary or appropriate. After the first meeting, the commission shall meet at least quarterly, or more frequently at the call of the chairperson or if requested by 3 or more members.
- (2) A majority of the members of the commission constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at a meeting of the commission. A majority of the members present and serving are required for official action of the commission.
- (3) The business that the commission may perform shall be conducted at a public meeting of the commission held in compliance with the open meetings act, 1976 PA 267, MCL 15.261 to 15.275.
- (4) Any writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by the commission in the performance of an official function is subject to the freedom of information act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 to 15.246.
- (5) Members of the commission shall serve without compensation. However, members of the commission may be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties as members of the commission.

Sec. 4. The commission shall do all of the following:

- (a) Not more than 2 years after the effective date of this act, submit to the governor and the committees of the senate and house of representatives with primary responsibility for agriculture issues, tourism issues, and local zoning issues a report that includes all of the following:
 - (i) A discussion of the effects of local zoning on agricultural tourism.
 - (ii) Model local zoning ordinance provisions to promote agricultural tourism.
 - (iii) Recommendations concerning the use of logo signage to promote agricultural tourism.
 - (iv) Recommendations for other measures to promote and enhance agricultural tourism.
 - (v) Other recommendations concerning agricultural tourism.
- (b) Undertake studies for the purposes of the report required under subdivision (a).

Sec. 5. This act is repealed effective 2 years after the effective date of this act.

This act is ordered to take immediate effect.

Appendix B – Commission Appointees

Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission Appointees

The Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission was created by PA 46 of 2005, effective June 16, 2005. The nine-member commission was created under the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) and appointed by MDA Director Mitch Irwin. Four of the members represent agricultural tourism enterprises, and two represent local government. The remaining commission is comprised of one member each from Travel Michigan; MDA; and a convention bureau, visitors' bureau, or chamber of commerce in a rural area.

The primary purpose of the commission is to study the impact of local zoning on agricultural tourism businesses. Zoning restrictions may become more apparent as agricultural tourism operations expand and develop in more urbanized areas with conflicting land uses. In addition to local zoning issues, the commission will also examine signage issues and ways to promote agricultural tourism in the state.

Agricultural Tourism Enterprises (4)

Walter Brys

Brys Estate Vineyards
Traverse City, MI 49686

Abby Jacobson

Westview Orchards
Romeo, MI 48095

Jim Graham

Wild game hunter
St. John's, MI 48879

Herb Teichman

Tree-mendus Fruit Farm
Eau Claire, MI 49111

Local Government (2)

Greg McKenzie

Lima Township Board of Trustees
Dexter, MI 48130

Carl Osentoski

Huron County Economic
Development Corporation
Bad Axe, MI 48413

Travel Michigan (1)

Melinda Remer

Travel Michigan
Lansing, MI 48913

MI Dept of Agriculture (1)

Ann Jousma-Miller

MI Commission of Agriculture
Gladstone, MI 49837

Chamber of Commerce (1)

Vickie Micheau

Delta County Chamber of Commerce
Escanaba, MI 49829

Appendix C – Commission and Subcommittee Meetings

Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission Meetings and Subcommittee Meetings

Full Commission Meetings

Date: October 19, 2005

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing, MI

Meeting Details: Commission's charge and organization; Commission has three subcommittees to discuss zoning issues, signage issues and awareness and promotion issues.

Date: January 9, 2006

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing, MI

Meeting Details: Updates from each Subcommittee; Introduction of the Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Association.

Date: December 5, 2006

Location: Amway Grand Plaza, Emerald Room, Grand Rapids, MI

Meeting Details: Final review of the Commission report to the Governor and Legislature.

Zoning Subcommittee Meetings

Date: November 29, 2005

Location: Westview Orchards, Romeo, MI (teleconference)

Meeting Details: Discussion of zoning issues and contacts needed.

Date: January 9, 2006

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing, MI

Meeting Details: Presentation from Michigan Townships Association.

Date: February 8, 2006

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing, MI (teleconference)

Meeting Details: Review of draft ordinance and updates.

Signage Subcommittee Meetings

Date: January 9, 2006

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing MI

Meeting Details: Review research finding by staff.

Date: July 18, 2006

Location: Geagley Lab, East, Lansing MI

Meeting Details: Review research finding by staff.

Promotion and Awareness Subcommittee Meetings

Date: December 13, 2005

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing

Meeting Details: Reviewed marketing and promotion efforts of MDA and discussed marketing strategy and partnership/incentive programs for agricultural tourism.

Date: June 29, 2006

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing

Meeting Details: Reviewed feedback from stakeholder organizations on recommendations for promotion and awareness of agricultural tourism in Michigan.

Date: September 7, 2006

Location: Constitution Hall, Lansing

Meeting Details: Reviewed subcommittee recommendations and implementation strategies.

Appendix D – Public Listening Sessions

Public Listening Sessions

Date: December 6, 2005

Location: Great Lakes Expo; Grand Rapids, MI

Number of Participants: 100

Target Audience: Farm Marketers and Agricultural Tourism Operators

Central Themes: Shared ideas regarding creating business

Date: December 8, 2005

Location: Great Lakes Expo; Grand Rapids, MI

Number of Participants: 25

Target Audience: Agricultural Tourism Operators

Central Themes: Zoning and planning issues

Date: December 15, 2006

Location: Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan, Quarterly Meeting, Okemos

Number of Participants: 15

Target Audience: Tourism Industry Leaders

Central Themes: Growing importance of agricultural tourism to Michigan's tourism industry

Date: January 17, 2006

Location: NW Orchard and Vineyard Show; Grand Traverse Resort

Number of Participants: 40

Target Audience: Wine Grape Growers

Central Themes: Zoning and planning issues

Date: March 2, 2006

Location: Annual Wine Industry Meeting, Crystal Mountain Resort

Number of Participants: 100

Target Audience: Winery owners, winemakers and marketing staff

Central Themes: Expanding capabilities to meet industry needs

Date: March 3, 2006

Location: Michigan Christmas Tree Association Annual Meeting, Mt. Pleasant

Number of Participants: 50

Target Audience: Christmas Tree Direct Marketers

Central Themes: Marketing and developing tourism products

Appendix E – Promotion and Awareness Information

Promotion and Awareness Subcommittee members:

Melinda Remer, Travel Michigan, Chair
Ann Jousma-Miller, Michigan Commission of Agriculture
Jim Graham, Wild game hunter
Carl Osentoski, Huron County Economic Development Corporation
Vickie Micheau, Delta County Chamber of Commerce
Jeanne Lipe, MDA staff

The following individuals provided input to the Promotion and Awareness Subcommittee:

Don Holecek, Director, MSU Travel, Tourism and Recreation Resource Center
Susan Smalley, Extension Specialist, C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems, MSU
Bob Craig, Director, MDA Agricultural Development Division
Ken Nye, Commodity Specialist, Michigan Farm Bureau
Bob Boehm, Commodity and Marketing Director, Michigan Farm Bureau
Denise Yockey, Executive Director, Michigan Apple Committee
Elaine Brown, Executive Director, Michigan Food & Farming Systems
Patrick O'Connor, Michigan Farm Marketing & Agri-Tourism Association
Bob Tritten, Southeast Region District Fruit Agent, MSUE Genesee County
Patty Cantrell, Director, Entrepreneurial Agriculture, Michigan Land Use Institute

As the interest in and focus on agricultural tourism has grown, so has the need for a coordinated effort to promote, enhance and grow this segment of the industry. There needs to be a combination of resources and collaboration among the many organizations that play a role in promoting and participating in agricultural tourism in our state, combined with a strategic industry and consumer outreach effort on the benefits and opportunities surrounding the industry. In addition, specific state resources need to be allocated to support the growth and promotion of this economically valuable industry.

Resources/Collaboration

Agricultural tourism is the practice of visiting an agribusiness, horticultural, or agricultural operation, including farms, wineries, or companion animal or livestock shows, for the purpose of recreation, education or active involvement in the operation. Agricultural tourism is considered increasingly important to Michigan's economic health and diversification.

Agriculture and tourism are the state's second and third largest industries, and combining them is a natural way to enhance both farm-gate value and economic stability. U.S. Census data shows that Michigan is one of the most popular destinations for pleasure trips. The tourism and recreation industry is expected to continue as one of the fastest growing industries in the U.S.

Several efforts have cropped up in Michigan, led by Michigan State University, Michigan Farm Bureau, the Ag Council, Michigan Integrated Food & Farming Systems, commodity organizations, and local communities. Two new statewide organizations have also been formed – the Michigan Farm Marketing & Agri-Tourism Association and the Michigan Farmers' Market Association. These efforts, although strong in their individual efforts, remain separate efforts. This has led to a duplication of efforts in some cases, and to a confused agricultural tourism industry that does not know where to go for assistance or information. There is a need to strengthen and expand agricultural tourism efforts within the Michigan Department of Agriculture so that MDA serves as a liaison and resource for agricultural tourism businesses and organizations in the state, and continues to reach out to partner organizations to collaborate and coordinate agricultural tourism efforts. The appointment of a manager and staff to coordinate agricultural tourism efforts of MDA are key to the success of other recommendations included in this report, and will help strengthen and grow agricultural tourism opportunities in Michigan.

The MDA Agricultural Tourism Manager Office should:

- Develop and implement a statewide Agricultural Tourism Strategic Plan, with industry input and support;
- Expand and maintain a database of agricultural tourism businesses for the purposes of promotion, communication, information outreach and research;
- Serve as liaison to other state agencies (Travel Michigan; Transportation; History, Arts and Library; Michigan Economic Development Corporation; Labor and Economic Growth; etc.) for collaborative projects to raise awareness of the importance of the Michigan agricultural tourism business to the state's economy, expand growth opportunities for agricultural tourism businesses, and bring issues affecting agricultural tourism to regulatory agencies for assistance in overcoming obstacles;
- Serve as liaison with other organizations that provide partnership opportunities in developing agricultural tourism opportunities, including Michigan Farm Bureau; Michigan Land Use Institute; local chambers of commerce and convention and visitors bureaus; county economic development offices; local units of government; Michigan Food and Farming Systems; MSU Extension; Michigan Festivals and Events Association; commodity organizations; Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Association; Michigan Farmers' Market Association; and others;
- Serve as a resource to a statewide membership association of agricultural tourism businesses to help identify funding opportunities through federal grants and foundation monies;
- Support an industry-driven effort to expand, promote and represent the interests of farm marketing and agricultural tourism businesses in Michigan.
- Nurture networking opportunities;
- Designate a staff person to represent MDA in an advisory and resource support capacity, and provide in-kind support for the newly formed Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Association as they recruit members and move toward financial self-sustainment.
- Develop public policy to support growth of agricultural tourism; and,
- Coordinate efforts with Select Michigan program staff to promote the purchase of Michigan grown and processed foods.
- Develop collaborative projects to raise awareness of the importance of the Michigan agricultural tourism business to the state's economy, expand growth opportunities for agricultural tourism businesses, and bring issues affecting agricultural tourism to regulatory agencies for assistance in overcoming obstacles.

Research/Planning

A recent study conducted by Michigan State University has helped give a picture of the size and scope of Michigan's food and agriculture industry and its various production sectors. In addition, a study conducted by Western Michigan University has provided a valuable snapshot of Michigan's agricultural tourism industry, the products sold through agricultural tourism businesses and the types of agri-tainment offered at these businesses. However, no comprehensive study has been done on the state's agricultural tourism industry. There is a strong need for consumer and industry research to gather benchmark information about the agricultural tourism industry in Michigan. This information is needed to effectively promote the industry, support its expansion, and to measure the success of promotional efforts in the future. Research results could also be shared with township and local officials to support agricultural tourism through fair and effective zoning regulations. Agricultural tourism research can be broken down into two areas: 1) a baseline industry study of existing agricultural tourism operations in Michigan to determine the current size, scope and economic impact of the industry in our state; and 2) a survey of existing and potential Michigan travelers to determine travel and spending habits as they relate to agricultural tourism (e.g., whether they visit agriculture-related properties, whether these visits are the primary purpose of their trip or part of a bigger travel experience, whether they take day trips or stay overnight, etc.), what they look for in an agricultural tourism experience, and their perception of Michigan's agricultural tourism industry. Once all the data is collected and evaluated, it will provide support for the industry at the state and local levels. The research will also provide the basis for MDA, with input from the industry, to develop a comprehensive strategic marketing plan for agricultural tourism in Michigan. Ongoing research will also be needed to measure and evaluate the success of future marketing and public relations efforts, using the benchmark research as a point of reference.

Increased Awareness and Outreach

Michigan's food and agriculture industry contributes \$60.1 billion annually to our state's economy, and employs over one million Michigan residents. Michigan ranks second among all states in the diversity of crops we grow. The agri-food industry is the second largest in Michigan and is ripe with the potential for future growth.

Educational efforts, combined with a promotional campaign, can help increase awareness of and support for Michigan's agriculture industry. There is a strong need to share the information gathered through research efforts with the agriculture industry and with Michigan consumers, through a two-fold educational effort. Opening up farms to visitors is increasingly becoming a way for Michigan growers to create a dependable source of revenue to ride out the uncertainties of crop prices, weather and disease. Offering fresh farm commodities directly to customers allows producers to trade on local flavor and freshness, which can lead to new product development and more efficient farm and marketing practices. Connecting the sale of fresh, locally grown products with a recreational or educational opportunity makes the farm a desired destination.

Agricultural tourism helps maintain the connection between where and how food is produced and our urban citizens. In 1930, one farmer produced enough food to feed mainly just his family, or about 10 people. Today, one farm supports 130 people. Nearly one-third of all crops grown in Michigan are consumed in other countries, yet research shows us that Michigan citizens prefer to buy locally and Michigan-grown food for its freshness, perceived higher quality and out of loyalty to support the local economy. As production efficiencies have increased, the need for a close connection with a farm has decreased, and more people have chosen urban lifestyles, or have followed paths to where jobs exist. As Michigan continues on its transformation from an automotive industry-based economy to a more high-tech, diverse economy, maintaining our state's agriculture sector becomes even more important. Educating consumers on the importance of supporting local farms and the recreational opportunities available at agricultural tourism operations will help support Michigan family farms by increasing the number of people who visit and purchase food products or agri-entertainment services.

As farmers feel the pressure of urban sprawl and skyrocketing land values, it is important to develop new ways of staying in business as a family farmer and to continue supplying safe, reliable and wholesome food. Adding agricultural tourism aspects to their existing production farms is a positive way to keep farmers farming.

Farmers have many reasons for expanding into agricultural tourism enterprises, including: keeping the farm in the family; allowing for continued farming; generating additional income or off-season income; capitalizing on a hobby or special interest; increasing and diversifying their market; enhancing quality of life; and educating customers about farming. Many farmers, though interested in new opportunities in agricultural tourism, do not have the time, expertise or other resources to develop these ventures. An educational campaign will help farmers interested in adding an agricultural tourism component to their operation understand the opportunities and risks involved and learn where to find information and assistance in promoting their new agricultural tourism operations.

Promotion

Agricultural tourism provides a wide variety of year-round family entertainment opportunities, from visiting greenhouses in the spring, fairs and festivals in the summer, pumpkin patches and apple orchards in the fall and Christmas tree farms in the winter. Michigan residents enjoy the bounties of Michigan agriculture and weekend treks to our farms; however, most are unaware of the importance of the agriculture industry to the state.

Agricultural tourism represents both an economic development opportunity as well as an opportunity to increase the prominence of Michigan agriculture. Farm-based recreation and tourism can increase farm incomes and rural economic activity, and at the same time generate exposure for Michigan's agricultural industry. Opportunities exist to tie agricultural tourism promotions to general tourism promotions or to cultural and eco-tourism efforts. The opportunity exists to promote the health, economic and social benefits of buying fresh, locally produced foods.

A promotional campaign that combines messages that promote the entertainment opportunities at agricultural tourism businesses, and the importance of supporting farms and buying locally grown products is needed in Michigan. Promotional opportunities can be developed around specially designated weeks or months (e.g., Select Michigan Week, Farm Market Month, Michigan Wine Month, etc.) or through regional or seasonal promotions. Travel Michigan has several free and low-cost opportunities for Michigan businesses to promote their products and activities. These free services are underutilized by agricultural tourism operations.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture recently developed an agricultural tourism Web page. The Web page should be expanded to provide information about agricultural tourism opportunities, trends and available services, and to serve as a tool for consumers to learn more about opportunities and events at agricultural tourism businesses. Several State of Michigan departments participate in a Cabinet Tourism Council, where ideas for collaborative promotions are shared. These efforts should be supported and encouraged by the Governor and Legislature.

The agriculture industry also has many promotional efforts. The State of Michigan should help promote, support and participate in the efforts of the industry to increase the impact of these promotions. In addition, the State of Michigan should invest resources in and provide an opportunity to leverage federal, state and industry resources through a matching grant program for agricultural tourism promotion, new product development, and market expansion.

Appendix F – Signage Opportunities for Michigan Agricultural Tourism Businesses

Agricultural tourism attractions are often located far from well-established travel routes. While many customers are prepared for, and in fact enjoy, the “off the beaten track” experience of a rural destination, customers need extra assistance in locating these businesses. Difficulty in finding a farm market or winery may lead to a negative consumer impression that will diminish customer loyalty and/or reduce purchasing at the farm. This subject area is known as “wayfinding” in the tourism and transportation industries.

Agricultural tourism operators should take full advantage of wayfinding methods that are available to them. However, in some situations the committee found that signage options available to the operators are unclear and inconsistent.

In addition to traditional signs that may be placed strategically along the route to an agricultural tourism location, new technologies such as Global Positioning Systems offer opportunities for wayfinding without signs. Marketing activities such as brochures with detailed maps are also a helpful tool for the agricultural tourism operator in directing customers to the business.

1. Tourism Oriented Directional Sign (TODS) Program - State Trunklines

In 1996, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) implemented a Tourist Oriented Directional Sign (TODS) program, in response to legislation, to provide identification and directional information for nearby tourist oriented activities, generally within 10 miles of state rural non-freeway roads. An amendment to the law was passed in January 2005 (Sen. Jason Allen P.A. 528) to make it easier to erect TODS signs on state roadways within the jurisdiction of local units of government. MDOT’s regulations for TODS follow federal regulations in the form of the Federal Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). MDOT has a contract with a private contractor, Michigan Logos, Inc., to administer the TODS program.

Eligible roadways:

State trunklines other than freeways (e.g., M-50, M-22, US-12) and Business Routes of federal highways within municipalities (e.g., Bus Rte. 94 in Kalamazoo).

Among eligible businesses are wineries and farm markets. There are eligibility requirements for minimum hours of operation, visitation numbers, and distance from the rural state roadway. Businesses whose customers are principally local residents are not eligible. A TODS review board has the authority to grant distance exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

Sign costs are covered by the eligible business and the annual fee to maintain them is \$360 per year per sign. Trailblazer signs may be required. Complete details may be found at www.michigan.gov/mdot

Contacts for the TODS program:

Michigan Logos, Inc. – Mike Kovalchik 517-337-2267 or 888-645-6467
MDOT - Mark Bott 517-335-2625



The subcommittee reviewed the TODS program and found that the existing program is not maximizing the opportunities available for the agricultural tourism industry. There is no state agency with clear responsibility for promoting the program to agricultural tourism businesses.

2. Limited Access Highways - LOGO Program

Under their jurisdiction, MDOT sets the regulations for logo signs on freeways. Logo signs are located on rural freeway rights-of-way to inform motorists of gas, food, camping, and lodging services at the upcoming exit. The Logo Program began in response to legislation in 1995. MDOT’s regulations for Logo Signs follow federal regulations in the form of the Federal Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Highway service-oriented businesses can place their company’s name, symbol, trademark or combination on the appropriate sign. There are no provisions for logo signs for attractions, including agricultural tourism businesses. If a farm market has a food service operation that meets the logo sign requirements, they may be eligible to participate. The cost per sign per business is \$850 per year, plus the initial sign fee.

MDOT has a contract with a private contractor, Michigan Logos, Inc. (MLI) to administer the logo sign program.

Eligible Roadways: Interstate Highways and other Limited Access Federal Highways (e.g., I-94, I-96, I-75, US-127, US-131)

Contacts for the Logos program:

Michigan Logos, Inc. – Mike Kovalchik 517-337-2267 or 888-645-6467

MDOT - Mark Bott 517-335-2625

3. Other Opportunities for Agricultural Tourism Signage - State Trunklines

There are eight types of signs standardized by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Most are concerned strictly with regulatory transportation and public safety information. Two types relate to tourism:

- # 5 Motorist Services Signs, (gas, food and lodging covered by Logo Program above) Welcome Centers, local Tourist Information Centers and Rest Area signs are included in this type of sign and have their own specific requirements.
- # 8 General Information Signs (TODS program, Heritage Routes,[e.g., US 12]). There is a provision for Scenic, Historic and Recreation Heritage Route designation.



The Michigan Department of Transportation identifies “Wayfinding Signing” as signs erected by municipalities along MDOT rights-of-way within municipal jurisdictions. These signs direct travelers to any private or public attraction off the state trunkline system. Examples are Business Routes of Interstate highways. Such signs take a lower priority to primary signing needs along the roadway. As described in the MDOT published *Guidelines for Signing on State Trunkline Highways*, “Highway signing is not intended for the purpose of advertising or promoting the facility, but to guide unfamiliar traffic seeking the facility.” This may provide opportunities for larger agricultural tourism operations.

4. County and Township Roadways

Zoning and signing ordinances specific to local units of government regulate requirements of safety, size, setback, construction standards, illumination, animation of signs etc.

Permits or licenses are generally issued by local zoning administrators and often with applicable fees. Some classes of signs, such as realtor signs, flags or small identification signs, are usually exempt from the permit approval process. These vary by jurisdiction.

Electronic and mechanically changing signs are generally more acceptable in non-residential urban situation. Some municipalities restrict the total number of outdoor billboard advertising signs.

While zoning and signage ordinances are regulated at the local level, there are opportunities for developing a best practices inventory and identifying successful local programs that can serve as models. One such example is the Southwest Michigan Wine Trail Association. The association has 12 members across three counties who collectively market their properties through a printed map and a Web site, www.miwinetrail.com. Working with their County Road Commissions, they have erected wine grape themed road signs to assist travelers in driving from one winery to another. The group also erected mailboxes at each trail member location where the public could pick up wine trail maps even when the winery itself is closed.

5. Billboards

State law and local ordinances regulate billboards and other private signs. The provisions are covered in Section 23 of Act No 106 of the Public Acts of 1972, as amended, section 252.323 of the Michigan Compiled Laws. Rules related to outdoor advertising covered by this statute are covered in R247.703 of the transportation code.

Outdoor advertising erected within 660 feet of the right-of-way in a city, village, or charter township, and within 3,000 feet of the right-of-way in other areas adjacent to interstate, freeway, and federal-aid primary highways, shall conform to the rules outlined in the rules. There are rules for sign spacing, size, and construction. A permit is required for signs located on property that is not owned by the advertised business.

Activities related to agriculture or forestry along roadways in rural areas where there is no zoning are not considered commercial or industrial.

According to the Outdoor Advertising Association of America, the travel and tourism industry is the leading buyer of outdoor advertising. Roadside businesses such as restaurants and lodging depend on billboards to direct travelers to their locations.



Travel Michigan has utilized Outdoor Advertising in recent years to increase awareness and use of the state's official travel Web site www.michigan.org.

Scenic Michigan is an affiliate of the national non-profit organization Scenic America. According to their Web site,

the organization "works to enhance the scenic beauty of Michigan's communities and roadsides. Our principal activity is informing the public of the economic, social, and cultural benefits of highway beautification. *Scenic Michigan* promotes and sponsors programs

to encourage natural beauty in the environment, enhance landscapes, protect historical and cultural resources, and improve community appearance."



6. New Technologies

New technologies provide opportunities for consumers to locate businesses in unfamiliar locales. Some of the possibilities that should not be overlooked in addressing the challenges of leading consumers to agricultural tourism attractions include:

GPS Coordinates: Many cars are now equipped with Global Positioning Systems. These electronic devices utilize satellite signals to navigate to within 20 yards of a specific location defined by latitude and longitude coordinates. Hand-held units are now available for under \$100 and can be operated from a vehicle. Fishermen and hunters have traditionally used hand-held units but use is spreading to tourism and other recreational pursuits. Agricultural tourism businesses are ideal candidates to use GPS coordinates in their marketing materials (business cards, brochures, billboards) to reduce the need for roadside signage.

FM Radio Signals: Low cost radio transmissions are commonly used near airports and major theme parks in the nation to provide updated information to travelers as they approach the vicinity. These can also be applied to individual agricultural tourism businesses, groups of nearby agricultural tourism attractions or by regional tourism associations to assist travelers in becoming aware of and locating agricultural tourism operators.

Interactive Web Based Mapping Tools: New tools assist travelers in planning their route to a location from home or en route via WI-FI or other communication systems. Laptop computers may be connected to a vehicle to assist in navigation.

Podcast Opportunities: Many tourism businesses are utilizing podcasts (audio broadcasts downloadable from a Web site) to provide additional information to travelers about a destination or attraction. This technology would allow detailed information about an agricultural tourism trail (including wayfinding information) to be carried in the vehicle with the traveler.

Appendix G – Zoning Information

Zoning can be an extremely complex and personal issue. It is one that is unique to each locality as community identities are based on zoning. As development increases in an area, so does zoning. The majority of the agricultural zoning disagreements can be found in more urban settings and in areas where development is on the rise. As such, it is crucial to create positive relationships between local government officials and members of the agricultural community.

As the economy continues to shift, it is especially important that local zoning boards in communities with agricultural activity address the issues surrounding agricultural tourism. Those issues include the rights of the business to grow and become more profitable while supporting the overall vision of the community. In turn, it is the responsibility of members of the agricultural community to be involved in local government and planning not only as advocates but also as educators. To achieve harmony among the viability of development and the viability of local agriculture a cooperative and comprehensive local zoning ordinance is needed. Compatibility between the two is key.

Zoning Subcommittee members:

Abbey Jacobson, Chair
Greg McKenzie, Lima Township Board of Trustees
Liana Bennett, MDA staff

The following group gave input into the model zoning ordinance provisions and the guidebook:

Rich Harlow, Farmland Preservation Program Manager, MDA
Walter Brys, Brys Estate Winery, Traverse City
Ed Carpenter, Peacock Road Tree Farm, Laingsburg
Doug Ewald, Commodities Specialist, Farm Bureau
Bill Anderson, Legislative Liaison, Michigan Townships Association
Andy Schor, Legislative Associate, Michigan Municipal League
Patty Cantrell, Director, Entrepreneurial Agriculture, Michigan Land Use Institute
Lynne Sage, Executive Board Member, Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Association
Steve Tennes, Executive Board Member, Michigan Farm Marketing & Agri-Tourism Association
John Warbach - Associate Director, Land Policy Program, Michigan State University
Joe VanderMeulen, Chief Executive Officer, Land Information Access Association

Appendix H – Other Issues

Insurance Standards

When farmers add in activities such as petting zoos, corn mazes, playgrounds and the like, they become part of the entertainment business. The general public is then invited onto their once private property to take part in these and other activities. The farmer's liability is two-fold: protecting his visitors from harm and his property from damage.

Insurance carriers in smaller rural areas where agricultural tourism businesses are found, tend to be smaller companies that do not offer the liability now required by the expanded business.

Due to the diversity in size and scope of agricultural tourism businesses, there is no standard policy or insurance definition available.

Kansas has a comprehensive insurance tax credit program. www.ksrevenue.org

Right to Agricultural Tourism Legislation

The Michigan Right to Farm Act, P.A. 93, was enacted in 1981 to provide farmers with protection from nuisance lawsuits. This state statute authorizes the Michigan Commission of Agriculture to develop and adopt Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) for farms and farm operations in Michigan. These voluntary practices are based on available technology and scientific research to promote sound environmental stewardship and help maintain a farmer's right to farm. The protective measures are effective up to the point of harvest of crops or livestock ready to be processed. Once any processing is done, the Right to Farm Act is no longer applicable.

The Michigan Agricultural Processing Act protects food processing operations from lawsuits claiming that the activities or conditions of a processor are a nuisance. The activities or conditions covered are those that are normal output for the operation. Although there are no GAAMPs for processing at this time, they are under development.

New Jersey has created comprehensive Right to Farm legislation that defines legislatively protected activities if farmers meet eligibility criteria. The legislation includes an agricultural commercial definition, and statutory, location, public safety and management practice standards.

New Jersey has developed an example of Right to Farm guidelines for agricultural tourism. www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/righttofarmact.htm

Appendix I – Papers and Surveys

Academic and Professional Surveys

There have been a number of academic and professional studies and surveys done on agricultural tourism, some specific to Michigan. The Commission has reviewed several of these and has focused on those listed below.

Study: Recreation, Tourism and Rural Well-Being

Where: Economic Research Service; United States Department of Agriculture

Who: Richard J. Reeder, Reeder and Dennis M. Brown

Date: 2005

Details: This study focused on rural areas around the United States that are dependent on recreation and tourism for economic stability. The study shows the socioeconomic affects of tourism in these areas. The majority of the findings were positive. www.ers.usda.gov

Study: A Marketing and Economic Analysis of Michigan's Wine Industry and Winery Tourism

Where: Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

Who: Ed Mahoney

Date: 2002

Details: The results of a study quantifies the economic and marketing relationships between tourism and Michigan's wine industry. The study also outlines tourism and wine consumption, potential markets, how to increase after-visit sales, and detailed profiles of winery visitors. www.michiganwines.com/industry.html

Study: 2002 Survey of Agritourism Operators in Michigan

Where: Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

Who: Deborah Che, Ann Veeck and Gregory Veeck

Date: 2004

Details: A survey was conducted to assess who patronizes Michigan agtourism operations and what brings them on site. The survey was developed by focus groups. Approximately 50 surveys were conducted at each of the 31 sites during August-October 2003. There were a total of 1,550 respondents to the survey. Including all persons accompanying the survey respondents to the agritourism businesses, more than 4,390 persons participated in the project. This is the most comprehensive study on agricultural tourism in Michigan. www.wmich.edu/geography/Che.htm#

Study: Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Organization Project

Where: Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

Who: Patrick O'Connor

Date: 2005

Details: As part of a doctoral thesis project, Patrick O'Connor surveyed over 300 agricultural tourism businesses in Michigan. The survey was so positive that it led to the creation of the Michigan Farm Marketing and Agri-Tourism Association.

Study: Select Michigan: Local Food Production, Food Safety, Culinary Heritage and Branding in Michigan Agritourism

Where: Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

Who: Deborah Che

Date: 2005

Details: This study was published in Tourism Review International, Vol. 10, 2005.

www.cognizantcommunication.com

Appendix J – Agricultural Tourism Activities in Other States

Below are examples of agricultural tourism groups and their activities in various other states.

Kansas

Contact: Janna Dunbar
Kansas Department of Agriculture
109 SW 9th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612
Phone: (785) 296 - 3556
Email: jdunbar@kansascommerce.com
Web site: www.kansasagritourism.org.

Kansas has an Agricultural Tourism Advisory Council that is made up of 20 individuals from around the state but does not have a membership association at this time. The Web site lists all of the Agricultural Tourism Advisory Council members as well as an events calendar, news stories and resources. There is a monthly e-newsletter with a featured operation.

In 2004, the Kansas legislature passed the Agritourism Promotion Act that encourages the growth of agritourism by creating a registration process through which the Kansas Department of Commerce can assist in the promotion of agritourism operations, limiting liability through signage, and creating a tax credit to help offset the expense of agritourism liability insurance for existing and new operations. New and existing agritourism operations must register with the Kansas Department of Commerce to be eligible for the limited liability and the income tax credit. There is no fee for registration.

Kansas also has an Agritourism Initiative to generate more tourism revenue for the state and to help Kansas farmers and ranchers boost their income. The Economic Development Initiatives Fund (EDIF), which is derived from the state lottery's profit, funds the initiative.

Kentucky

Contact: Kelly Ludwig
International Marketing
Kentucky Department of Agriculture
100 Fair Oaks Lane, 5th floor
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
Phone: (502) 564 - 4983
Fax: (502) 564 - 0303
Email: <mailto:Kelly.Ludwig@ky.gov>
Web site: [www. Kyagr.com](http://www.Kyagr.com)

Kentucky has an agritourism council comprised of 25 people. The activity level of the council is increasing. The agricultural tourism program is run through USDA grants and was founded on House Bill 654. The most recent inventory resulted in 300 agricultural tourism operations.

Woodford County in Kentucky has been used as a national model for agricultural tourism zoning ordinances. Many of the farms in the area had been used for tobacco fields but have since converted into a variety of agricultural tourism businesses. The county is home to wineries, apple orchards, pumpkins, Christmas tree farms, wool/sheep, cattle farms, catfish ponds, shrimp farmers and nature preserve concept camping and crafts. The county has been very proactive with land use planning. They have also created an Ag Review Committee to oversee zoning applications. Copies of the ordinance and supporting documents are available. Contact: Patti Wilson, Planning and Zoning (859-873-8611).

Missouri

Contact: Tammy Bruckherhoff
AgriMissouri Program
Missouri Department of Agriculture
1616 Missouri Blvd., PO Box 630
Jefferson City, MO 65102
Phone: (573) 522 – 4170
Fax: (573) 751-2868
Email: agrimo@mda.mo.gov
Web site: www.agrimissouri.com/agrimissouri.htm

Although Missouri does not have a formal agricultural tourism office, they do promote this industry through various means. AgriMissouri is their official marketing campaign. The State Travel Council lobbying staff handles any legislative issues. "Show Me Missouri" is a travel magazine that promotes agricultural tourism businesses. The publisher of this magazine is also the avenue for TODS sign assistance. Contact: Gary Figgins gfiggins@showmemissouri.com.

New Jersey

Contact: Bill Walker
Division of Marketing and Development
New Jersey Department of Agriculture
John Fitch Plaza
PO Box 330
Trenton, NJ 08625-0330
Phone: (609) 292 - 5536
Fax: (609) 984 – 5367
Email: mailto:william.walker@ag.state.nj.us
Web site: www.state.nj.us/jerseyfresh/agritourismhome.htm

The New Jersey Agri-Tourism Industry Advisory Council is charged with researching current and potential agricultural tourism opportunities and making recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture on ways to expand and promote agricultural tourism in New Jersey. The council is made up of fourteen members. Five are at-large agricultural tourism operators, one from the New Jersey wine industry, one from the New Jersey Agricultural Fairs Association, one from the New Jersey Equine Industry Advisory Council, one from the New Jersey Direct Marketing Association, and one from the New Jersey agricultural museums/living history farms. There are also four ex-officio members that represent the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers University, and the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Development Commission. The council is very active and has funded a study of agricultural tourism by Rutgers University. They are also active in finding out what impedes the success of agricultural tourism in terms of zoning, signage, parking, etc. Detail on the council, its mission and specific projects is available.

Wisconsin

Contact: Anna Maenner
Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association
"Visit Dairyland"
211 Canal Road
Waterloo, Wisconsin 53594
Phone: (920) 478 – 3852
Fax: (920) 478 – 9586
Email: acminc@verizon.net
Web site: www.visitdairyland.com

The Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association is a stand-alone, membership dues paid organization. There are 55 members. The association receives grants through the State Travel Organization. There is beginning work between the Departments of Travel and Agriculture with regional programs, "Country Trails".



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